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# HISTORY *of* Thyatira Church

Rowan County  
North Carolina







HISTORY  
of  
THYATIRA CHURCH  
1753 to 1925

INCLUDING ADDRESS DELIVERED BY

REV. S. C. ALEXANDER

At the Centennial Celebration  
Held on October 17, 1885.

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*By*

REV. THOMAS W. LINGLE, Ph.D.

Professor of Modern Languages  
Davidson College.

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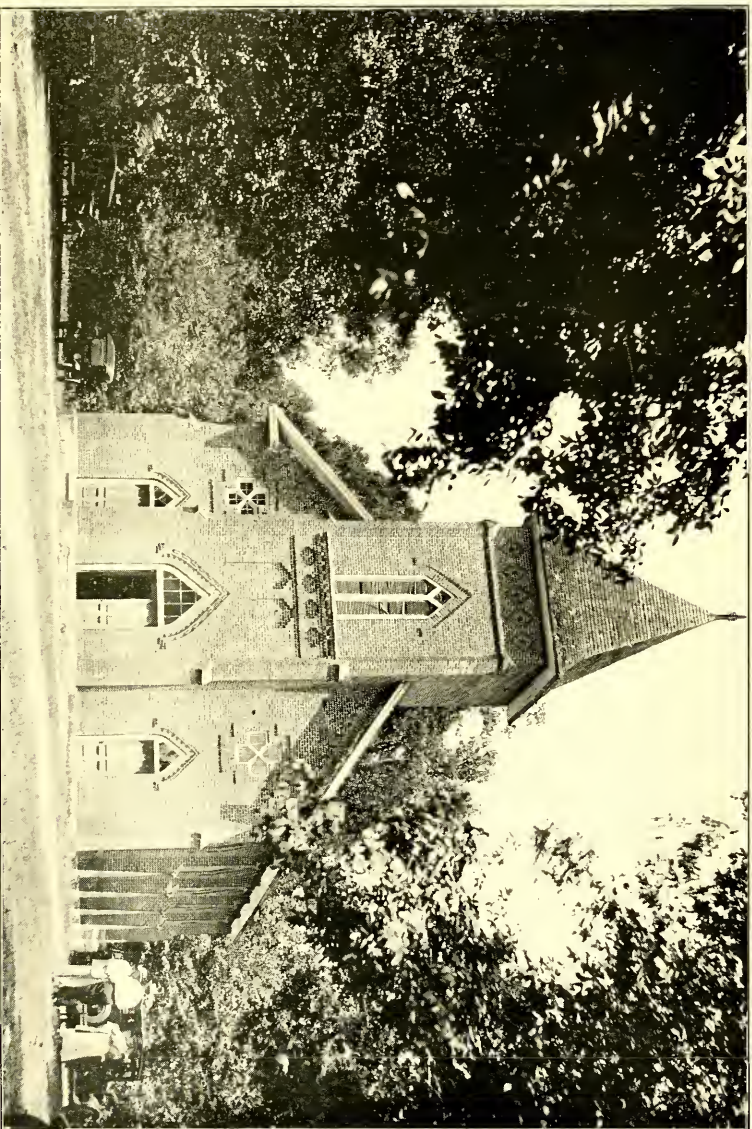


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THVATTIRA CHURCH



## INTRODUCTORY

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Rev. W. M. Walsh, while pastor of Thyatira church nearly twenty years ago, was appealed to by many in the congregation, to prepare a historical sketch of the church from 1855 to the present time. The idea was to supplement and bring down to date the work prepared by Rev. S. C. Alexander in connection with the celebration of the centennial of the church. Mr. Walsh set himself to the task as opportunity presented itself. He gathered bits of information from the older members of his congregation the most of whom have since then passed away. He conducted some correspondence with persons residing at a distance, and read such printed and written matter as was available. His idea was to follow the plan of the Alexander sketch, confining himself largely to some account of the pastors and elders. He made a start at the actual writing, to the extent of sketching the pastors for a period of twenty years or more following the year 1855. We have incorporated in this paper the information gathered by Mr. Walsh, and even some of his language, for all of which we hereby make due acknowledgment.

For the information contained in all the rest of this paper we have had to look to other sources. We have broadened the original plan and have endeavored to present a far more complete picture of the life of the church than was at first contemplated. We have enjoyed the study, with the many happy memories of our early years, that have been vividly recalled. Our highest hope is that we have permanently preserved some facts relating to the church, that might otherwise have been lost in a few more years, and that this humble effort may furnish at least some slight pleasure and inspiration to all who love the name of the venerable church and who do us the honor to read the story that we have endeavored to relate.

T. W. L.



# Historical Address

*Delivered at the*

## Centennial Celebration of Thyatira Church,

Rowan County, N. C.

October 17, 1855

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By REV. S. C. ALEXANDER, *Pastor*

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ABOUT one hundred years ago, the gospel trumpet was first sounded on this sacred spot. And, thanks be to God, its notes have greeted our ears and cheered our hearts. Often have these hills and valleys round about echoed the high praises of Jehovah. Often during that long period have our fathers had their "times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord." But they have gone to their graves and we will not deplore them.

We have met today for the purpose of celebrating no small event—for the purpose of celebrating the goodness of God manifested toward us and our fathers for the space of a hundred years. Generation after generation has passed away, but Thyatira yet stands; because God has written his name here. It is a vine planted by his own right hand, therefore He has watered it, and made it to flourish and send forth many branches, to bless and prosper a large community.

We propose on this occasion, to give a brief historical sketch of the Ministers and Elders of this church, and also to glance at the times of her mourning and rejoicing.

The name of the first minister of Thyatira is not certainly

known. The old deed of the church lot, given on the 1st of January, 1753, by John Linn, to the congregation, informs us that the gospel has been preached here earlier than has generally been supposed. It specifies the congregation "belonging to the lower meeting house between the Yadkin and Catawba Rivers adhering to a minister licensed by a Presbytery belonging to the Synod of Philadelphia." Neither the name of the Presbytery nor minister is given. It is probable he was a missionary who preached here only occasionally. In this same year of 1753, "two missionaries were sent by direction of Synod, to visit Virginia and North Carolina—Mr. McMordie and Mr. Donaldson." No mention is made in the records of the settlements they were to visit, except they were to "show special regard" to the vacancies of this State between the Yadkin and Catawba; the very portion in which we live. Possibly our first minister was McMordie or Donaldson. This was nearly one hundred and three years ago.

Although the name of the servant of the Lord who first proclaimed the gospel here may be forgotten, and the places on earth that knew him once will know him no more forever, yet his work has stood for more than a century, and we trust will stand to bless generations yet unborn.

The name of Hugh McAden stands first on the catalog of the ministers of Thyatira. Of those who preceded and immediately succeeded him, we have no history or record to tell of their labor of love. But doubtless their names were written in the hearts of those with whom they lived.

In 1757, Mr. Miller and Mr. Craig were ordered to spend each one Sabbath at Thyatira.

In the fall of 1755, Mr. Hugh McAden visited North Carolina and preached at "Cathey's Meeting House," which was a small log building that stood where the graveyard now is. He was a native of Pennsylvania, an alumnus of Nassau Hall, and a member of Newcastle Presbytery. He was connected with the church as a missionary, and that only for a few months. We know not whether he ever preached here on more than two or three occasions. Having just been licensed, he

set out on a tour through the provinces of Virginia and the Carolinas, to visit the Presbyterian settlements that were scattered over that tract of country like islands in the sea, or oases in the desert. His journey was long and arduous, but doubtless the cause of joy to many a Christian heart. In 1757, he was ordained to the full work of the gospel ministry. Not long afterwards he returned to North Carolina and spent most of his ministerial life in this State—in Duplin and New Hanover and the remainder of his days in Caswell and Pittsylvania, Virginia.

In 1781, he closed his earthly existence, and only a few days afterwards, the ruthless British soldiers plundered his house and destroyed many of his most valuable papers. In consequence of this but little is known of this remarkable man. Although the history of his labor of love may be erased from earth, yet doubtless, it is known in heaven and on the great resurrection morn, scores, and perhaps hundreds, may rise up and call him blessed.

At the time of Mr. McAden's visit there were few, if any, regularly organized churches in this part of the State, but each community had its own meeting house and each anxious to have the gospel preached in its own neighborhood; and ministers being so few in number, this desire could not be granted. The consequence was a clashing of entreaties, and some contention among the smaller societies. If quarrels were ever pardonable, certainly these should have been. But in order that these difficulties might be removed, the Synod of Philadelphia sent the Rev. Messrs. Elihu Spencer and Alexander McWhorter, in the year 1764, to mark out the proper places for churches, and also their boundaries. "Cathey's Meeting House," under the name of Thyatira; and Centre, from its position, by the advice and authority of this Committee, superseded all other places of worship, and were, at that time, the only churches in a long strip of country extending from the Yadkin to the Catawba.

In 1772 Rev. Mr. Harris took charge of this church and remained only two years. From the very facts we have rela-

ting to him, it may be inferred that he was a faithful minister—one who endeavored to build up his people in knowledge and righteousness, and who prayed and labored much for the purity and prosperity of Zion. Whether he was a pastor, or only a stated supply, is not known. From whence he came and whither he went after leaving this place, we cannot tell. The records of Thyatira have ever been so poorly kept, or rather not kept at all, that it is now impossible at this late period to write anything like a full and accurate history of her early ministers, of her first struggles for existence; or whatever else may have been interesting or praiseworthy is now almost entirely lost in oblivion.

The Rev. Samuel Eusebius McCorkle, D. D., the first minister certainly known to have sustained the relation of pastor to this church, was born in 1746, in Lancaster County, Pa. When he was ten years old, his parents removed to North Carolina, and settled in this county.

Young McCorkle made great proficiency in his studies, and gave signs in his early youth of his future usefulness. Having a strong desire to be skilled in literature and science, at the age of twenty he commenced the study of the classics. The greater part, if not the whole, of his preparatory course was under the direction of the Rev. Dr. Caldwell, of Guilford.

In 1772 he graduated at Princeton. His attention was immediately turned to the work of the ministry. In the Spring of 1774 he was licensed by the Presbytery of New York.

He was then employed about two years to labor in Virginia. And on the 2nd of August, 1777, by the Presbytery of Hanover, was ordained and installed pastor of Thyatira church, and remained the under shepherd of the flock until removed by death, to the presence of the great "Shepherd and Bishop of Souls."

About the year 1785, and in the eighth of his pastorate, Dr. McCorkle commenced a classical school, which proved a great blessing to both Church and State. The first class that was graduated at Chapel Hill consisted of seven scholars, six

of whom had been pupils of Dr. McCorkle. "His pupils, in after life, were found on the bench, in the chair of State, and 45 of them in the pulpit." Had this been all that he ever did, it would have been in itself sufficient to have handed his name down to posterity as a benefactor of his race.

In 1775 he was elected to the first professorship of our State University, but thought it proper not to accept, notwithstanding he felt a deep interest in the welfare of the institution. He labored much for its prosperity; traveled much to raise funds for its use; was present at the laying of the corner stone of its first building, and delivered an address. And his name is on the list of its Board of Trustees.

He was an ardent friend of sound learning and religion. He was also a laborious pastor—indefatigable in his efforts to improve his flock in divine things. He not only presented truth abundantly in his discourses on the Sabbath, but also prevailed on his people to study the Scriptures at home, and in order to do this he had a Bible class, composed of the principal part of his congregation, commencing with the book of Genesis, he proceeded regularly through the Bible. Such questions were asked as would lead to reading and reflection.

Speaking with respect to this system of instruction, the venerable man said: "I have found it profitable to myself and my people, and can venture to say that so far as I have proceeded, there is not a congregation on the continent better acquainted with the scriptures."

The Bible and Catechisms were the text books in those days. And we should profit by their example and learn a lesson from our fathers. It is to be feared that the wisdom and piety of our ancestors shone more brightly than that of their children; although we may live, as is commonly said, in a more enlightened and prosperous age.

Dr. McCorkle was a highly gifted man, an elegant scholar, and an eminently successful minister of the gospel.

At the commencement of the great revival in 1802, Dr. McCorkle was slow to believe in its purity, owing to the very strange exercises accompanying it. But being persuaded to

attend a meeting in Randolph, his mind underwent a change. He came to the conclusion that the revival was the work of God, but that the wonderful "exercises" which followed it were not necessary effects of the Spirit, and he therefore, bore open testimony against such proceedure. The consequence was, some of his people agreed with him in his opinion, while others honestly differed. This difference became wider and the excitement greater, till it was deemed best for the cause of religion, that the congregation should separate. Accordingly in 1805, Back Creek church was set off from Thyatira as a separate congregation, under the pastoral care of Rev. Joseph D. Kilpatrick.

Like a brave and undaunted soldier, the first pastor of this church was faithful to the last, in the discharge of his high and solemn duty. "He received his death warrant in the pulpit, being struck with palsy while conducting the exercises of the sanctuary."

His labors as a minister were done, but as a suffering man he continued for several years. His mind and body were both shattered by the severity of the stroke. "On the 21st of June, 1811, he ceased from his trials," after about six years of painful affliction, and a long life of arduous labor in his Master's work.

When this great and good man had been rendered unable to perform the duties of his sacred office, he was succeeded by the Rev. John Brown, D. D. From the year 1807 to 1809, he preached as a stated supply both at Thyatira and Salisbury—one-half of his time at each place.

He was a learned man, skilled in theology, literature and science. He was principal of a flourishing Academy in the town of Salisbury. But was permitted to remain only about two years in this community to break unto them the Bread of Life, and to train the young for future usefulness. He was called to the presidency of South Carolina College, but afterwards removed to Georgia, and became the President of Athens College, and there ended his useful life.

About the commencement of the year 1814, the Rev.

John Carrigan was called to take charge of this church, together with Bethpage—one-half of his time to each. While examining his character, we were forcibly impressed with the truth that he was a man of more than ordinary piety. We judge of a man's strength by what he is able to perform. So we judge of his piety by what he was able to endure under adverse circumstances, and still maintain his Christian character unsullied.

Mr. Carrigan was not only a good man, but he was highly useful wherever it was his lot to live. In his younger days he studied medicine and became a practicing physician. This knowledge was a source of gratification after he had entered the ministry. He could often alleviate the pains of his people when sick; and the poor especially found in him a valuable friend, and a physician both for the body and for the soul.

Like both of his illustrious predecessors, he was engaged in teaching school and preaching the gospel. So did almost all the Presbyterian ministers in those days. Other men who may have been qualified as well as they, were engaged in more lucrative business, and therefore would not teach; and this important work devolved on them.

As a minister of the gospel, Mr. Carrigan had the wisdom of the serpent, together with the mildness of the dove. By the grace of God he was made wise to win souls for Christ. Once when traveling, he stopped to spend the night at a widow's home. Her only child was a daughter living with her. After supper, while in conversation with the young lady, Mr. Carrigan remarked that he knew one who would make her a fine companion. Her curiosity was greatly excited to know who he was. "O!" said the preacher, "He is a most excellent friend; he would make you happy all your life and happy in eternity." "Do tell me who it can be!" said she. The preacher, with great solemnity replied, that it was the Lord Jesus Christ. The young lady was struck dumb with astonishment. The truth never before had been presented so forcibly to her mind. The result was that she had no peace of con-

science till she was a converted woman, and assured of the fact that Christ was indeed her friend.

Mr. Carrigan was naturally of a lively temperament and pleasing in his manners, and was well calculated to win the affection and command the respect of all who knew him. Eight years he labored to build up this church in knowledge and righteousness. On the 31st of March, 1822, he closed his useful life, and now doubtless is enjoying the reward of a faithful minister.

The Rev. James Stafford was the next pastor chosen by the two churches, Thyatira and Bethpage. He was a man highly esteemed and beloved by his people. But when our legislature passed that act forbidding slaves to be taught to read, he was so much displeased with it that he determined to leave the commonwealth. He had been the pastor of this church for the space of about eight years, and then moved to the Northwest, and is now living at Highland, Illinois.

The Rev. Elijah Morrison succeeded Mr. Stafford as stated supply to both the above named churches, and continued for only one or two years. He was afterward pastor of the church in Concord. But has recently moved to Wadesborough, in this State.

In the Spring of 1831, the Rev. Thomas Espy commenced his labors in the churches of Thyatira and Salisbury, and was permitted to continue in his work for the space of one short year. He was seized with a hemorrhage of the lungs which put an end, in a great measure, to all his pulpit exercises. "Of middling stature, a slender frame, somewhat delicate constitution, he had permitted his ardent desire to build up the cause of Christ to lead him to efforts in public speaking beyond his strength." His ardent heart made him forgetful of himself; and in consequence of a cold, caught during a series of appointments in the Fall of 1831, his lungs gave way, and he was able to preach no more. On the 16th of April, 1833, he breathed his last, in full hope of a joyous resurrection.

"Mr. Espy," says one who knew him well, "possessed a

quickness of apprehension and patience of investigation, rarely found in combination. He was not what is called a popular preacher, but he was something a great deal better." His preaching was plain, pointed and practical. It was his delight to hold up Christ and him crucified. He was a man greatly beloved in his life, and lamented at his death.

After Mr. Espy, the Rev. Patrick J. Sparrow, D. D., supplied this church and the church of Salisbury, for one year, and was then called to a professorship in Davidson College, which institution commenced in 1837. He was afterwards made the President of Hampden Sydney College in Virginia. He is now preaching as a stated supply at Pensacola, Florida. Like a bark upon the billow, he has been greatly tossed on the ocean of life.

In May, 1835, the Rev. James D. Hall was made pastor of Thyatira and Franklin—one-half his time at each place. This relationship continued till the Fall of 1846, when he removed to Goshen and New Hope, where he yet remains breaking unto the people the Bread of Life.

In the Fall of 1846, the Rev. Stephen Frontis became the stated supply of this church for half of his time. He also preached at Franklin and Center. This arrangement continued till the Spring of 1851, when Center employed him for the whole of his time. And in the good providence of God he is yet spared to preach that gospel which has cheered and strengthend him so long, even down to a good old age.

After Mr. Frontis left, the Rev. James M. H. Adams preached here occasionally for a few months as stated supply. He is now the minister of the church in Yorkville, S. C.

In March, 1852, Mr. Robert Agnew, a licentiate under the care of Concord Presbytery, became the stated supply of Thyatira and Back Creek, and continued to preach until June, 1853, when he left and is now in Winnsboro, South Carolina. And in March, 1854, he who now addresses you, commenced his labors among this people and the people of Back Creek. May God give him grace to discharge his solemn duty aright!

We will now proceed to give a short sketch of the

## ELDERSHIP

Owing to the entire want of a church record, it must needs be but a meager outline of their history. A few aged fathers of a former generation yet remain to tell us of those who in early times lived and labored here, for the prosperity of Zion, of those who, like many of the excellent of the earth, have quietly performed their work, and quietly have been carried to their graves, but left behind them impressions, lasting to eternity.

One of the first elders of this church was the father of Dr. McCorkle. He removed from Pennsylvania to this community, in the year 1756. He was a man of ardent piety. His physical powers began to fail before his son became the pastor of this church. But he, together with the partner of his life, lived to enjoy the pleasure of sitting under the sound of the gospel from the lips of their own son, in whom they had unbounded confidence. Thus having reached to a good old age, they died, and were laid side by side in Thyatira graveyard.

William Cathey was also one of the elders. But little is known of his history. It is probable that this church received its first name from him or family. It was known for a long time as "Cathey's Meeting House." If this supposition is true, it was a beautiful tribute paid to a good man. Though he was not permitted to see the times of refreshing in the beginning of this century, yet we trust he was made infinitely happier by being removed from earth to heaven.

John McNeely was born in Pennsylvania in 1724. After arriving to years of manhood, he, together with many others, sought for themselves a home in the more genial clime of the Carolinas. He settled in the bounds of this congregation, and about the time of the organization of the church, was elected an elder. He was a man of sound mind and warm-hearted piety, and beloved and respected by the church in which he ruled. He was strict Presbyterian. He taught his children the standards of the Church. They not only had the Shorter Cate-

chism memorized thoroughly, but were able to repeat the Larger verbatim—an attainment that is seldom reached in these latter days. He thus continued to let his light shine till 1801, when his long and exemplary life was ended.

Tradition says that the venerable James Graham was made an elder when this church was organized. He was born in Scotland in 1695, 160 years ago. In the land of Knox and Chalmers, like many of the noble spirits of his day, he grew tired of tyranny and oppression, set sail for the land of freedom and found a home in the bounds of this congregation. He lived to a good old age, and died in 1782. It is to be lamented that so little is known of the early fathers of Thyatira. Their history, like their bodies, is buried, and buried forever.

John Dobbin was a venerable father in the church, and one of her first servants. He was a straight-forward, honest man, one who endeavored to practice the principles he professed; who delighted in his Master's work; was anxious for the prosperity of Zion; and especially for that part in which he lived. In his life, like Job, he was greatly afflicted with sores, which doubtless, in the end, proved a blessing. His afflictions taught him that his happiness could not be found in perfection here, and that he must needs be prepared for a better land, where the inhabitants shall not say, "I am sick," and where "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes, and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things have passed away."

Samuel Barkley moved to this part of the State in its early settlement. He was elected an elder in this church, and served it with fidelity to the end of his life, which event closed about the close of the last century. He was a man of some sprightliness of character, keenness of perception, and was conscientious in the discharge of his duty.

About a hundred years ago, Pennsylvania sent many of her noblest sons to this part of the country, to subdue the wilderness, to build up churches, and to advance the cause of liberty and true religion.

William Bowman was also among the earliest ruling elders of Thyatira church. But little is known of his history. He had two sons who were Presbyterian ministers, who moved somewhere to the Southwest many years ago.

On the 11th of March, 1795, Mr. Bowman was killed, while coming from Salisbury with his wagon. From the fact of two of his sons being ministers of the gospel, we might reasonably suppose that he ordered his family aright, and set before them a Godly example.

John Barr was born in Pennsylvania in 1749. In 1765, he came with his father's family to North Carolina and settled in this county, and having lived fourscore years and two, he died. John Barr was no ordinary man, whether he be regarded as a farmer, as a student, or as a ruler in the church. In each of these departments he gave signs of greatness. He was a scientific agriculturist, an assiduous student, and an elder highly esteemed. He was emphatically a systematic man; everything he did seemed to be in accordance with some pre-arranged plan. His attainments in science and literature were commendable. When we consider the difficulties which he had to surmount, we are astonished. It is said with credibility, that three months was the entire time that he spent at school. But when we remember that his ardent thirst for knowledge led him to spend an hour in the morning, at noon, and at night, with his books, through a long life, we cease to wonder at his great acquirements. In his day there was a library in this church, composed of not many volumes, but well selected, such as "Rollins' Ancient History," "Gibbon's Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire," "Mosheim's Ecclesiastical History," "Prideaux's Connections," "Hume's History of England," "Butler's Analogy," and such like standard works, from which he drank often, and drank deeply. But above all, he was a student of the Bible. The book of inspiration seemed to lie open before him like a map, to be seen with one view. He gave himself, his influence, and of his money, for the furtherance of his Master's Kingdom.

He assisted in the Sunday school, and lent a helping hand

to all benevolent institutions of his day. His character has been beautifully sketched by another. The writer says: "A day laborer on his own farm, bred to no mechanic art, yet an architect by rule, a weaver of most tasteful diamonds for domestic coverlets, and successful student of Bacon's Principles of Inductive Philosophy; the best cooper of the district, while Locke himself, could scarcely have with more skill, unfolded the treasures of his own treatise on Human Understanding; seldom beyond the limits of his own county, yet on the map of the world, in tracing the boundaries of empires, and course of rivers, as much at home as in the relative possession of his fields and the current of the interesting books; a man of domestic spirit and habits, yet conversant with the transactions of European courts, as if commissioned to treat with them on questions of national importance.'" (See Life of John Barr)

When Back Creek was set off as a separate congregation, he was elected there to the same spiritual office, which he filled with ability till the close of his life. But few churches could boast of such an elder, few communities of such a man, and few children of such a father. He had a mind well stored with useful knowledge, a heart warmed with true piety and a disposition sweetened with the Christian graces. His body now lies in Thyatira graveyard. Honor to his name, peace to his ashes!

Thomas King was a man of ardent piety, of remarkable modesty, clothed with prudence, and blessed with a strong mind. In the exciting times in which he lived he observed causes and could foretell effects, and was thus enabled so to direct his steps, as to win the approbation of all. In the great revival, his conduct was praiseworthy; he neither joined those who fanned the flames of excitement, nor those who desired to quell it. But his steady aim was to roll on the chariot of salvation. In 1805, he went to Back Creek and was a worthy member of that church and session till his death, which occurred in the year 1812.

Thomas Gillespie was a man of sanguine temperament, and was very zealous in the cause of his Master. Nothing

cheered him more than to see the Church "lengthening her cords and strengthening her stakes." He was gifted with the tongue, and often exhorted his brethren at prayermeetings, and such like places, to press forward to the kingdom, and urged the ungodly to flee to Jesus Christ for safety. He was thought by some to be loquacious, but if such was his loquacity, it was certainly pardonable.

Some deemed him eccentric, but if such was his eccentricity, it was noble and praiseworthy. In 1805, he became an elder in Back Creek. A few years afterward he moved westward, and his bones now lie somewhere in Tennessee.

Abraham Lowrance was an ardent friend of liberty, a true patriot, and a soldier in a double sense; for he served his country in the struggles of the Revolution, and afterwards became an office-bearer in the church. He manifested as much zeal in the latter as he did bravery in the former, was always ready for his Master's service, and humbly performed his duty. His lamentation was that he had done so little for Christ, and had made such slow progress in divine life.

During the great revival he was once complaining of his spiritual deadness and coldness in religion. He was called on to lead in prayer, and when he had poured forth the feelings of his heart in earnest supplications, a friend remarked to him that a man who could pray, as he had prayed, ought not to complain of coldness and barrenness. "Ah," said he, "Something whispered to me, 'Well done, Abram.' " In 1805 he joined the session of Back Creek, afterward having removed to Statesville, he closed his useful life.

William Bell was also a lover of liberty and true religion. He was both a servant of God and of his country; he dared to unsheath his sword in the defense of the one, and to devote his life in the service of the other.

His highest eulogy was that he was an intelligent man and a warm-hearted Christian. He, together with Lowrance, King, Gillespie and Barr, left this church for the purpose of building up another. Their names will ever be remembered as intimately connected with the early history of Back Creek, and

her first eldership. Men, too, that were an honor to the community in which they lived, one of whom the church might well be proud.

Thomas Cowan, a man of sterling worth. His valor was proved in the war of the Revolution. He contended earnestly for sound principles, and fought bravely for right and justice. Probably in the battles of his country, he learned that it was also his duty to battle in the cause of his Prince and Saviour. As he was an officer in the former, so also in the latter. No one probably was more zealous for the Redeemer's kingdom. This venerable house, now moldering with age, bears witness to his Christian zeal and energy; for he was one of the leading spirits that assisted in its erection. He was blessed with a sound judgment, clear mind and a warm heart. He was sociable in disposition, and instructive in conversation. A young friend of his once desired to know how springs of water could gush from the top of the highest mountain. "Why, son," said he, "If you will cut your head with a knife, will it not bleed?"

Joseph Kerr was possessed of great energy of character. Nothing that was possible seemed too difficult for him to undertake, if duty pointed to it. That great truth uttered by Sallust, seemed to have been his motto—"Suoe quisque fortunoe faber." There have been but few better examples of honest industry and frugality. But his highest eulogy by far, is, that he was a good man and a warm friend of the church. He felt that without the religion of Jesus Christ, the Church would be destroyed, and the community debased. Hence his zeal in the noblest of all causes. And in that remarkable time of refreshing which came from the presence of the Lord, in the early part of this century, he took a deep interest and an active part. He was always ready to push forward the work of the Master. In short, he was a kind neighbor, a good citizen and a venerable elder.

James Stewart was a man of good understanding, of knowledge and piety. He had much to hinder him in his Christian life. He lived when infidelity was rampant, not

only in this region, but in other parts of the world. There were those akin to him who openly denied the Christian faith. But we have reason to believe that he came off victorious through Christ over all his spiritual enemies. For saith the Scriptures, "I will be a God to thee and thy seed after thee." His son, William, became a Presbyterian minister, and an advocate of the same great truths that cheered his father's heart.

James McCulloch was a father in the church; a bold, fearless Christian man, who had courage to think for himself, and to speak as he thought; was a prominent member of the session, and a warm friend of the cause in which he was engaged. His useful life was ended in the year, 1812.

William Cowan, a half-brother to Thomas, whose character has already been noticed, was remarkable for punctuality. The snow and sleet and the wintry blast, did not keep him from the sanctuary, without a better reason, a virtue that will cause any man to be respected.

Time would fail me to speak at length of the excellencies of William Gibson, Francis Gibson, and James Silliman, of whom the church might well be proud; modest and unassuming in their disposition, and when duty called, they were always found at their post. Also Richard Gillespie, and of his son, James A. Gillespie, who was beloved and highly esteemed in life, and in death, not forgotten. And of William Miller, Henry Winders, William Chambers, and Matthew Locke, that man who bid fair to be one of Thyatira's most useful servants. These were all excellent men and venerable laborers in the vineyard of Christ. But they all died comparatively young in their Master's service.

John Reed, whose name was omitted in its proper place, was an elder in this church about the time of the great revival. After the death of Dr. McCorkle he removed to Tennessee.

I have thus briefly glanced at the history of those men who have been elders of this church, and have since gone to reap their reward.

James Caruthers yet lives in the bounds of this congregation, although well stricken in years, being now almost four

score and ten. Jacob Skiles removed to Tennessee, where he yet lives. Captain John McCulloch, for many years an elder in this church, now lives in Statesville. Husto Patterson, was elected and ordained an elder in Thyatira church, but after some years joined Back Creek church, and is now there holding the same spiritual office.

The present bench of ruling elders consists of six, viz.: Alexander Lowrance—this venerable father, now in his 78th year, most frequently walks to church, a distance of three or four miles, proving himself faithful even down to hoary age. When the Lord takes him home, Thyatira will have to mourn the loss of her best man. The remaining five are: Thomas Todd, James Gibson, John Lowrance, John Silliman, and John K. Graham.

In all, there have been thirty-seven ruling elders ordained in this church—a band of noble men, who took for their guide the Word of God, and its happy principles, we trust, have borne those who have gone before us safely into the haven of eternal rest.

It is a cause of gratitude to God to see that he has blessed and sustained the descendants of those venerable fathers who have lived and labored during the past century in this church. Many of their children are still here to fill their seats, as private members as well as office-bearers; and many may be found in the neighboring churches, occupying similar places of usefulness. This is remarkably true with reference to the eldership. With but few exceptions, those excellent men who first ruled in Thyatira, have left, each, a son to stand in their stead and fill their responsible office. The names of Lowrance, Gibson, Graham, Gillespie, Cowan, King, Barr, McCulloch, Silliman and others, can testify to the truth of that precious promise, "I will be a God to thee and to thy seed after thee." Thus hath the mantle of the father fallen upon the son; and if it please the Lord may it continue until the end of time.

The territory of this church was once very extensive, but church after church sprang up in her ancient limits, until it has grown much smaller than in former times. Third Creek

was set off in 1798, Back Creek in 1805, Prospect in 1824, and Salisbury in 1821. Franklin, Unity, Bethesda, and a part of Fifth Creek, also, now occupy ground that once belonged to Thyatira. In the last hundred years, great changes have been wrought in the natural and moral worlds. A century ago this country was like one vast prairie, with trees scattered here and there, while the earth was covered with a carpet of luxuriant grass, with flowers of every hue interspersed, to beautify the scenery. It was then the home of the Indian; he roamed undisturbed over his native hills and valleys, and obtained his subsistence from the earth's spontaneous productions. But how changed the scene! The beauty of the prairie has been destroyed, and the last Indian has gone to his grave.

A hundred years ago, we, or our ancestors, were living far in the interior, and heard from Europe or the old world but once in six months. Now, if we do not hear every nine or ten days, we are disappointed. During that long period, the Church has also passed through many changes. The infancy of Thyatira was spent in much tribulation. And when it was older, it had to contend with strong enemies. About the close of the last century, infidelity, with all its strength and subtlety, attacked the church. Many of the strongest men in this community, at that time, were deeply tainted. Religion seemed to pine away and almost die; the Church mourned her low state, and the Lord heard her prayers, and had compassion upon her, and thanks to His Name, infidelity, with all its cunning advocates, could not triumph, but was foiled in all its base attempts. The revival of 1802, gave it a fatal blow, so that its hideous head has never since been raised so high, to pollute and annoy the Church of God.

The venerable fathers who labored in the early existence of this church, have, one by one, all gone to their graves. But they have left us a rich legacy; a free country, a prosperous church and happy homes, made so by the inculcation of pure principles. They also subdued the wilderness, established schools and advanced the cause of true religion.

A hundred years more and all who now hear my voice

must go as our fathers have gone. We are following fast in their footsteps. The congregation here, will soon be removed, one by one, to the congregation of the dead. The great change will go on slowly and steadily, until all these pleasant faces shall molder into dust.

“Art is long and time is fleeting,  
And though our hearts are stout and brave,  
Still like muffled drums, are beating  
Funeral marches to the grave.”

Then, if this be true, let us be up and doing! Let us leave to those who succeed us, a still richer legacy than was left to us; that the Church may go on prosperously, and soon hail the bright Millennial Day. Let each of us be a valiant soldier in the army of Prince Immanuel, that we may win unfading laurels and a crown of glory that shall outshine the sun.

“In the world’s broad field of battle  
In the bivouac of life,  
Be not like dumb driven cattle,  
But be heroes of the strife.”

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**NOTE**—The celebration continued for eight days, during which time the gospel was faithfully preached, and the Lord saw fit to bless His Word in a most wonderful manner. Between forty and fifty persons expressed a willingness to give themselves up to Jesus Christ, to be his follower; and gave pleasing evidence of a change of heart. It was, of a truth, a pentecostal season. Every heart seemed to be deeply impressed with a sense of divine things. “Thou God seest me,” seemed to be the feeling of all. The aged fathers and mothers tell us that they have not seen such in fifty years—since the great revival of 1802.

# HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THYATIRA CHURCH 1855—1925

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*By* THOMAS WILSON LINGLE  
(A Son of the Church)

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The author of the first part of this sketch, Rev. Samuel Caldwell Alexander, was the pastor of Thyatira from March, 1854, to December, 1858. He was the first graduate of Davidson College ever called to this pastorate, being a member of the class of 1848. He studied theology three years at Columbia Seminary. Coming to Thyatira in the full vigor of young manhood, at the age of twenty-four, he proved to be aggressive along all lines of work, a preacher of the truth, firm and fearless, a popular and faithful pastor, exercising the arm of discipline with the help of an able session. The old church made good progress during his pastorate, and reluctantly gave him up.

Mr. Alexander prepared the greatly prized sketch of the history of the church when he was only twenty-five years of age, and when he had been in the community only a year and a half. There could be no better evidence of his unusual historical and literary gifts, and ability to acquaint himself with the people of a community and their history and traditions in a remarkably short time.

Mr. Alexander held pastorates in Arkansas and elsewhere after leaving Thyatira, and lived to a ripe age. The writer of these lines recalls an address he heard Mr. Alexander deliver at Davidson College in the early nineties, on "The Stone Kingdom," showing a remarkable familiarity with the Scriptures and extensive study of unfulfilled prophecy. His printed works are still found in many homes throughout the Southern Presbyterian Church.

Rev. Barnabas Scott Krider was the next pastor, taking charge in 1859, at the age of thirty. Prepared for college by the noted Peter Stuart Ney; a graduate of Davidson College in the class of 1850 along with Jethro Rumble, also a graduate

of Princeton Seminary, Mr. Krider had one of the most fruitful, though brief, pastorates in the history of the church. His written sermons and other works show him to have been a man of scholarly attainments. Older members of the church have often spoken to the writer regarding Mr. Krider's able preaching and tender ministrations in the pastorate. After his first year he preached at Thyatira every Sabbath. There were two very gracious revivals of religion, the second, occurring only two weeks before his death, resulting in the addition of twenty-seven persons to the membership of the church.

The death of this gifted, godly, beloved man occurred October 19, 1865, at the early age of thirty-six. His wife survived him nearly forty years, always a highly esteemed member, faithful to the end in attendance upon the sanctuary. A son, bearing the father's name, is still a faithful member of the congregation. A brief appreciation of the life and work of Mr. Krider is contained in a memorial sketch by Rev. G. D. Parks.

The present substantial brick edifice used by the congregation, the fourth in the history of the church, was erected during the pastorate of Mr. Krider and completed in 1860, just before the outbreak of the Civil War. Reference is later made to its dedication. In that day it must have been no small task to find the means in a rather sparsely populated community to erect such an edifice.

The church was next served for seven months by Rev. W. A. Wood, also a graduate of Davidson College where he was a member of the class two years behind that of Mr. Krider, the two having been very close friends since college days. Mr. Wood was not installed pastor of Thyatira. However, the church was fortunate in having the ministrations of such a man even for a short time. For thirty years Rev. William A. Wood, D. D., was pastor of the church in Statesville, formerly known as Fourth Creek, where he was regarded as one of the ablest, as well as one of the gentlest and saintliest of men. A large portrait of him hangs today in the office of the

President of Davidson College, of which institution he was a valuable Trustee for twenty-nine years.

The next stated supply after Dr. Wood was Rev. John D. Wilson, also a graduate of Davidson College. He remained only two months, and was followed by Rev. George M. Gibbs, who began his labors at Thyatira in August, 1867, giving half of his time to Franklin church with which Thyatira became associated in securing a pastor. He resigned the pastorate the following year for some reason not very clear today, and little is known of him after that time.

Thyatira and Franklin next issued a call to Rev. Dr. Samuel Caldwell Pharr, who graduated at Davidson College in the class of 1841 along with Hon. J. G. Ramsay and Dr. Burton Wood, both so long and so favorably known in Rowan and Iredell Counties. Dr. Pharr received his degree also from Princeton College, studied theology at Union Seminary in Virginia, and received the degree of Doctor of Divinity from Centre College in Kentucky. Dr. Pharr served Thyatira four years as pastor. Among the infants he baptized were several who are now officers in the church, as well as the writer of this sketch. Many who sat under the preaching of Dr. Pharr often spoke many years afterwards of his pulpit work as being of a very high order. He was a man with a remarkably clear voice, delivering his sermons with fervor, yet not in labored style. His two congregations were scattered over a large territory which he traversed over and over again in his efforts to serve his people. In wintry weather he endured hardships to serve his people. Rumors arose as to some irregularities of conduct while on these trips, which eventually were the occasion of intervention by Concord Presbytery. In the trial the prosecution was conducted by Rev. Jos. B. Mack, then the young pastor of Rocky River church. The differences of opinion arising were the occasion of the termination of the pastorate, and Dr. Pharr on leaving Thyatira went over to the Methodist church, in which he had a useful ministry until his death in Stokes County in 1886, at the age of sixty-one. Testimony of his faithful service at Thyatira was found, not

only in the resolutions drawn up by a committee of the church appointed for the purpose, but also in the reverent and affectionate manner in which his friends in the congregation mentioned his name for many years after his departure.

After Dr. Pharr, Thyatira had no regular pastor for a period of four years, due in part, no doubt, to dissensions, as well as to difficult conditions following the Civil War. The spiritual life of the church during that time left much to be desired, of which hints are found here and there in sessional records. There were few accessions to the church, various members were charged with conduct not befitting true Christians, though the session seems to have been faithful, including as it did at that time some men whose lives and character were a steadying influence for all those about them.

The great Head of the Church, however, was preparing a man who could fall into the breach and bring harmony out of discord, fruitfulness where there had been comparative barrenness. Mr. J. Alston Ramsay, of Salisbury, a graduate of Davidson College and in his second year at Union Seminary, came to supply the church during the summer of 1876. His work was of such a promising nature that the people were not long in deciding that his services as regular pastor would be highly acceptable. During his remaining year at the Seminary the church secured a stated supply in the person of Rev. Peter Tinsley Penick, educated also at Davidson College and Union Seminary, and destined to have later a remarkable pastorate in Mooresville until his death in 1886. During this period Mr. Kiah Price Julian was also brought to Thyatira to conduct a private school. Mr. Julian was also a native of Salisbury and college classmate of Mr. Ramsay, and like him a candidate for the ministry. Mr. Julian, remembered as a very genial, attractive young man to whom all homes were open, assisted in the work of the church as opportunity presented itself. Leaving the community to continue his education, Mr. Julian had useful pastorates in several States until his death at Micanopy, Florida, in 1889.

The church made out the formal call for the services of

Mr. Ramsay in March, 1877, and his pastorate began when he completed his seminary course in May. He labored fourteen years in our midst, rounding out one of the longest pastorates in the history of the church, and evidently one of the most useful. A few months after his arrival work was begun on a manse located on a choice lot in the settlement of Mill Bridge, a few hundred yards distant from the church. The young pastor was not long in fulfilling the desire of the congregation by bringing to the new home one who would gracefully preside over it,—formerly Miss Belle McNutt, of Hampden Sidney, Virginia.

Mr. Ramsay took a bold stand for Christian Education, and was largely instrumental in the erection of a school house on the church grounds and in bringing to the community a Christian teacher, John Correll of the Prospect neighborhood, who taught a classical school and exercised an influence over the youth of this section, that reminded many of the days of Dr. Samuel McCorkle and Zion-Parnassus nearly a century before. Mr. Correll was an unofficial assistant to the pastor, boarded in his home for a time, sang well and was leader of the choir, was most valuable in the work of the Sunday school, promoted co-operation among the young people, was an inspirational force in the men's prayer-meetings held every Sunday afternoon, brought many young men to a willingness to lead in public prayer, and it was largely his influence that decided various young men and women of the congregation to dedicate their lives to Christian work at home and abroad.

Mr. Correll was a gifted teacher, preparing many young people for college. He entered into the life of the community in a remarkable way, especially as it centered about the school and church, assuming at times a heavy burden in that connection while always bearing a heavy domestic burden, showing now and then an unusual sense of humor, while ordinarily grave in manner for a young man of his years. After consecrating his best efforts of body, mind, and heart to the school and church for a period of seven years, he moved with his family in the year 1891, to Edna, Texas, where he was super-

intendent of schools until his death in November, 1900. His wife (nee Emma Brookfield, one of his former pupils at Thyatira) and children are residing in Waco, Texas, at the present time. Mr. Ramsay rendered a great service in bringing this godly, gifted teacher to the community—a man whose memory is still held in affectionate regard by so many men and women to whom he brought a vision of the opportunities of life and the privilege of service.

Mr. Ramsay, a man of versatile gifts, brought scholarship, zeal and a fine sense of the practical to his work in our midst. Though reared in town, he was well equipped for serving a country church such as Thyatira. With his coming, the association of Thyatira with Franklin was severed, and a grouping with Thyatira's daughter, Back Creek church, was established, which has happily continued for nearly half a century to the present time. More than once there has been discussion of the question as to Thyatira's having a pastor for his whole time, but the conclusion has ever been that Back Creek and the mother church should not be separated.

All still living, who sat under the preaching of Mr. Ramsay, bear testimony to the excellence of his sermonizing, the soundness of his theology, the clearness of his thought, and his gifts of expression. Always a frail man physically, Mr. Ramsay was a hard student, a man of refined taste and sentiment, gifted with discernment and tact, and the visit he made annually and oftener to each member of the congregation was appreciated by all and was an inspiration to many a family. He was faithful in visiting the sick and the sorrowful, conducted the funeral services when the parents of many of us were laid to rest in the old churchyard, and with a text such as, "Prepare to meet thy God," would hold up to us the issues of life and death as few men are able to do.

Mr. Ramsay received the degree of Doctor of Divinity from Davidson College, was elected Stated Clerk of the Synod of North Carolina in the year 1886, which position he continued to hold until his death. Dr. Ramsay was prominent as a Presbyterian, versed in the Book of Church Government and Presby-

terian Law, and a number of times he was the Commissioner of Concord Presbytery to the General Assembly, taking an active part in the deliberations of the highest Court of the Church.

In 1891, Dr. Ramsay accepted a call to the church in Hickory where he again had a successful pastorate until his death in the year 1900. Mrs. Ramsay and their only daughter now reside in Gastonia, where they are valued members of the church in that place.

Though the departure of the Ramsays from Thyatira was greatly regretted, the church lost no time in securing a new pastor, so that not a single Sunday passed without preaching. The name of Rev. John Abner Harris was proposed by R. E. C. Lawson, then in charge of the school at Thyatira and seems to have been seconded by Dr. Ramsay himself. A graduate of Davidson College and Union Seminary, Mr. Harris came to Thyatira in July, 1891, to undertake his first pastorate, first as supply, having received the formal call in August, and he was not ordained and installed until the following January. Mr. Harris was a man of quiet, modest manner, serious in purpose, untiring in the performance of his pastoral duties among the people, and numerous persons from the borders of the congregation, who had gotten out of the habit of attending church, came gladly to hear him preach. He was ever a welcome guest in the homes of the humblest as well as others, and won the affection of the children of the community. He stressed the importance of the young men's prayer-meeting which had been inaugurated in the days of Dr. Ramsay and Mr. Correll, and it continued to do a most excellent work during the entire pastorate of Mr. Harris.

Mr. Harris resigned the pastorate at the end of seven years, in October, 1898, to undertake Home Mission work in the mountain counties of Concord Presbytery, and there, within the bounds of the present Synod of Appalachia, he continued faithfully in the work until his death in the year 1924.

Thyatira was without a regular pulpit supply until May, 1899, when Rev. Geo. L. Cook came and served as supply for a period of five months. Mr. Cook was a man with a clear

voice, pitched rather high, a logical thinker, and gave forceful expositions of Bible truth. He was succeeded as supply for a short time by Rev. John W. Lafferty, to whom a formal call was then extended by the two churches. However, Mr. Lafferty decided to accept a call to a church in Florida, much to the regret of those who had come to appreciate his earnest gospel sermons.

The next regular pastor after the departure of Mr. Harris was Rev. John A. Gilmer, a graduate of Davidson College, who had had long experience as a teacher, and had studied theology privately for a long time and for a year at Union Seminary. Mr. Gilmer took up the work at Thyatira in July, 1900, remaining until the Spring of 1904, when he accepted a call to the church in Newton. Mr. Gilmer came to Thyatira as a man of much experience, who had worked hard and thought much. His large heart and sympathetic nature, and his devotion to duty, enabled him to establish a relationship between himself and the people, that was most happy and fruitful. The work of the church made good progress during this pastorate, there being seasons of special grace, notably during the meeting conducted by Rev. Dr. A. R. Shaw, then of Henderson, N. C. At this time twenty-seven young people were received into the church on examination. Thyatira was host to Concord Presbytery in September, 1901. Mr. Gilmer made a very strong appeal personally to the older members of the congregation, who had a real affection for him, and a right royal welcome always awaited him and Mrs. Gilmer when they returned for short visits in after years. Mr. Gilmer died in 1913, while pastor of the church at Mt. Airy in Orange Presbytery, while Mrs. Gilmer now resides with relatives in her native town of Morganton.

The church was next supplied by Rev. J. B. Branch of Columbia Seminary, to whom a regular call was extended by the two churches. Pending his ordination and installation, he labored with great acceptance during the summer of 1905. Mr. Branch was a young man of independent nature, at home with all classes of people, able to take a hand in any situation

in the home, around the woodpile and the barn yard or in the field, as well as in the Sunday school and in the pulpit. No one could have made more warm friends in so short a time. With regret the church concurred with his request to be released from his obligation, in order that he might continue his studies at Princeton, New Jersey. His brief ministry at Thyatira was such as to establish great confidence in future service for Mr. Branch in the ministry.

In the spring of 1906, a call was extended to Rev. W. M. Walsh, then of Stanley, N. C., a graduate of Davidson College and Union Seminary. Mr. Walsh took charge of the work in March, and soon won a warm place in the affections of the people, young and old. Mr. Walsh was a quiet man, rather timid in manner, conscientious to the last degree, faithful in all particulars, a lover of the word of God,—a man whose Christian piety no one could ever think of calling into question. In times of sorrow and distress the sympathy and comforting words of Mr. Walsh were always eagerly sought. His heart was unreservedly with his people to whom he ministered in the home and in the pulpit for a period of four and a half years while the congregation showed a loyalty to him that must have given him courage. More than the usual number of persons united with the church during the ministry of Mr. Walsh and the roll of members showed some increase despite the steady drift of population toward the towns and cities. The names of many sons and daughters of Thyatira who moved away, were transferred to the rolls of the churches in Salisbury, Statesville, Mooresville and other towns.

Mr. Walsh resigned the pastorate in January, 1911, to accept calls to Statesville and Barium Springs, leaving there later for pastorates in Sherman, Texas, and Abingdon, Virginia. He is now pastor of the last named church, in the Synod of Appalachia.

The pulpit was supplied by various ministers during the year and a half following the resignation of Mr. Walsh. The one who remained longest was Rev. J. A. McQueen, a graduate of Davidson College and Princeton Seminary, and who is

now the efficient pastor of the church in Rockingham, N. C. He supplied Thyatira acceptably during the summers of 1911 and 1912.

September 1, 1912, marked the arrival of Rev. J. C. Grier, a graduate of Davidson College and Union Seminary. Mr. Grier came direct to this pastorate from the Seminary without previous experience as pastor, and remained until the Spring of 1916. Mr. Grier was a son of the manse, his father being at the time a most influential member of the Presbytery and the able minister of the First church in Concord. Young Mr. Grier was earnest in his efforts, he visited extensively in the homes of the congregation, and gave his best to the interests of the church. After leaving Thyatira he served for a number of years within the Synod of South Carolina. He is now pastor at Rutherfordton in the Presbytery of King's Mountain.

Rev. E. D. Brown became the pastor of Thyatira and Back Creek churches October 1, 1916. His pastorate is now the fourth longest in the history of the church, the three who served for a longer period being Dr. Samuel McCorkle (1777-1807), Rev. James D. Hall (1835-1846), and Dr. J. A. Ramsay (1877-1891). Dr. Brown grew up in the Steele Creek congregation near Charlotte, graduated at Davidson College, and Union Seminary, and held pastorates at Kinston in the Presbytery of Albemarle, at Concord (Iredell) and at Hopewell in Mecklenburg. Probably no pastor of Thyatira for the past hundred years has been the recipient of so many marks of confidence as Dr. Brown. He was honored with the degree of Doctor of Divinity by his *alma mater*. He has served as Moderator of two Presbyteries, and of the Synod of North Carolina. He is Stated Clerk of the Presbytery of Concord, a trustee of the Edgar Tufts Memorial Association at Banner Elk, of Davidson College, and also of Union Seminary. He has served three times as Commissioner to the General Assembly.

Dr. Brown brought to the work sermonizing ability of a high order, and unswerving devotion to the great doctrines

of our Church, facility in leading the people in singing the songs of Zion, a cheerful disposition, a genius for friendship, abiding loyalty to the great Head of the Church, and last but not least, a life-partner who is often cited throughout the Synod as a model in her position and relation to the work in a rural congregation.

During Dr. Brown's pastorate, for the first time, there has been preaching service every Sunday at both Thyatira and Back Creek. This has been made possible in part by the great improvement in the condition of the public roads and the introduction of the automobile, as well as by Dr. Brown's physical strength and his zeal for the work. There has been steady growth in the work of the church, so that both membership and attendance on the average are larger than ever in the past. There are now on the roll of the church the names of 242 members in good and regular standing.

### THE ELDERSHIP

A study of the sessional records of Thyatira, as well as our own personal knowledge of many of the men concerned furnishes clear proof that the session of the church has usually had a high conception of its duty, responsibility, and authority, that it has been faithful to its trust through the years, that its personnel has included men of the highest type of Christian character and piety, men commanding the highest esteem of their fellow-citizens. They have been loyal to their pastor and to the church, and have faithfully studied the things pertaining to the Master's kingdom. They have many times waited upon members of the church who were engaging in sinful practices, and often have persuaded such to endeavor to lead a new life. In several cases, men thus waited upon by some esteemed member of the session have given up the sinful practice, and in time have themselves become members of the session and have in turn been appointed by the session as a whole to wait upon others leading a sinful life, and bring them back to the fold. In some instances wayward members

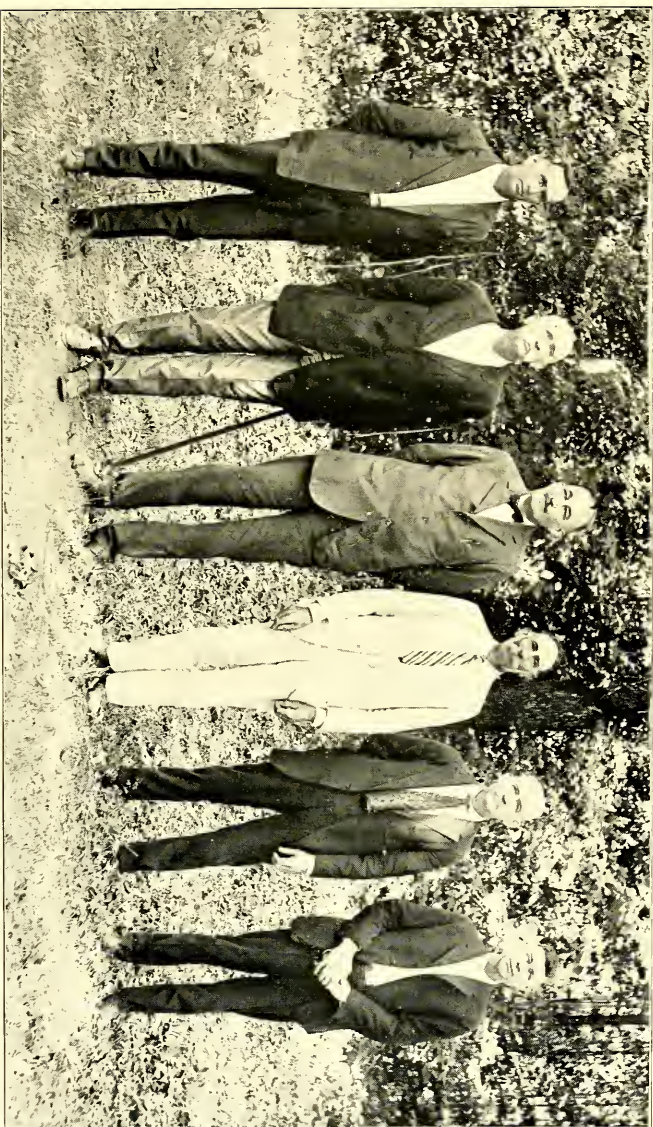


Photo by Alexander, Salisbury.

#### SESSION

Left to right—J. S. McCorkle, II. W. Silliman, Rev. E. D. Brown, Pastor,  
J. F. Turner, J. W. Sloan, Clerk, E. S. Miller.



of the church have been summoned before the session, after repeated exhortation and entreaty, and in a few instances names have been dropped from the membership role.

The session has been punctilious in regard to appointing delegates to attend meetings of Concord Presbytery and the Synod of North Carolina. Presbytery has many times honored this church by naming some one of its elders a Commissioner to the General Assembly. It is to be regretted that the compass of this narrative does not admit of a more complete sketch of each of the elders of the church.

At the close of the pastorate of Rev. S. C. Alexander in 1859, the bench of elders was composed of Alexander Lowrance, Thos. Todd, James Gibson, John Silliman, and John K. Graham. Four of these had been members of the congregation from their earliest years, while Mr. Todd had been received on letter from the church in Concord and Mr. Graham from the church in Charlotte. Alexander Lowrance was respected as a veritable patriarch in the church, attaining to the age of more than four score years, during all of which he lived very close to his God, and he was held in the highest esteem by all the people of the community. In his early days he had worshipped in the second church edifice, located nearer the churchyard than the present one, had completely outlived the third edifice, and at his advanced age in 1860 he laid the cornerstone of the present building. This stone is in the northwest corner of the church. It contains a glass jar in which a Bible, a hymnal, a catechism and certain records are said to have been deposited. It is related by Mr. Jno. K. Goodman (of Back Creek) and others who were children at that time and were eye-witnesses of the scene, that Mr. Lowrance, by reason of his extreme age and infirmities, required the physical support of two of his fellow elders as he carried out his part of the programme, making a rarely impressive scene.

The death of Mr. Lowrance occurred in October, 1868, in the 91st year of his age, having been an elder for more than fifty-five years.

Mr. Todd was a well known man in his day. His stout figure was rarely absent from the sanctuary on the Sabbath, and in the deliberations of the church "Tommie" Todd could be depended upon for sound advice. His familiar, strong hand appears in the records of the session of which he was the efficient clerk as early as 1844, succeeding Elder John McCullough in this office. Mr. Todd kept the records of the session until the meeting held April 10, 1863, after which his familiar hand appears no more. His last recorded presence at meetings of the session was May 22, 1869. The record of August 13th of the same year, speaks of the session adopting a "minute of respect and resolutions on the death of Mr. Thos. Todd," which occurred July 23rd. This minute, recorded in the sessional record, like that pertaining to Mr. Lowrance, speaks in terms indicating that a man, who had served his day and generation in a very remarkable way, had passed from earthly scenes, lamented by the entire church and community.

James B. Gibson held the office of ruling elder in Thyatira for forty-one years, from time to time presided over congregational meetings, and left behind him the record of a pure life marked by faithfulness and zeal for things of the Kingdom. Kind and tactful in manner, he was often delegated by the session to wait upon some erring member and endeavor to recover such a one from a life of sin or neglect.

The writer vividly recalls from his boyhood memories the familiar figure of "Uncle Jimmie" Gibson, as he was affectionately called, on horseback as he rode with marked regularity from his home, five miles away on the Salisbury road, to the house of God. Neither heat of summer nor rough road nor wintry blast could deter this saintly man when in health from attendance upon the sanctuary. His erect figure on horseback, his sharp facial features and his white head, with eye directly to the front, his kindly greeting to those he passed, his earnestly attentive posture during the service at church and the funeral service in 1885, at which all that was earthly

of this faithful elder was laid to rest, will be to the writer a memory so long as life shall last.

John Lowrance, son of the venerable Alexander Lowrance, was a worthy son of a worthy father. He was loyal to his church and reared a family, all of whom followed his example in this respect.

John Silliman was the son of an elder, and an elder himself for thirty-six years. He was a man of some diffidence in public, rather severe in manner, a firm ruler in his own household, a man of prayer, of irreproachable character, a regular attendant upon all meetings of the session, served on numerous committees, was faithful to duty, and was held in high respect by all in the congregation. His death occurred in 1891.

John Knox Graham, born of Scottish ancestry and bearing the name of Scotland's most famous son, a cousin of President Polk, a member of the first class to enter Davidson College, became an elder in 1855, at the age of thirty-five. He exercised this office for a period of forty years until his death in 1895. His clear, legible handwriting in his capacity of Clerk of the Session begins with the record of the meeting held April 12, 1863, in Civil War days, when he succeeded Thos. Todd as Clerk. His familiar hand, now become that of an aged person, occurs for the last time in the sessional record of October 6, 1895. For a period of about forty years Mr. Graham was also Superintendent of the Sunday school. In the absence of the pastor he often conducted the morning service, reading a sermon or giving a talk of his own. Mr. Graham represented Thyatira or Concord Presbytery at more meetings of the Courts of the Church than any other elder in the history of the church. He was versed in Presbyterian Law, informed as to the work of the Presbyterian Church, and enjoyed association with his fellow-presbyters.

As a man and citizen Mr. Graham was a cheerful spirit, abounding in humor, famous as a "crier of auctions," for many years a noted justice of the peace, and was known far and wide in church circles and as an intelligent citizen.

Henry Sechler and his family transferred their member-

ship from Zion Reformed Church to Thyatira in the fifties, and they soon became thoroughly identified with the interests of the church. Mr. Sechler was ordained elder November 10, 1860, this being the earliest existing record of the election and installation of church officers. He faithfully discharged the duties of the office until his death in 1875, at an advanced age.

There has probably been no other man in the history of our church, whose religion and church meant more in his private life. For the church and all its interests his prayers ascended daily to the throne of grace. He was an exemplary citizen and neighbor, a good liver, a kind friend—just the kind of a man to be delegated by the session to wait upon members of the church who were neglectful of their Christian duty. Three of Mr. Sechler's daughters survived him for many years, their home was noted for its hospitality and the wholesome Christian spirit that prevailed in it, while they all three were faithful to the end in their devotion to the church and its interest. In their home were to be found many valuable books pertaining to the history of the Christian Church, to an understanding of its doctrine, and to the teaching of God's Word. These three sisters attained to an average age of more than fourscore years each, all their years being full of good works.

Major Newberry F. Hall was ordained elder at the same time with Mr. Sechler, though his term of service was far longer, continuing until his death in 1889. He was a member of the committee that supervised the building of the church in 1860. Major Hall was a man of far more than ordinary intelligence, and his knowledge and judgment were sought far and wide by friends and acquaintances. He represented Rowan County for a time in the General Assembly of North Carolina, just as he often represented his church and Presbytery at meetings of Courts of the Church. Major Hall reared a godly family, all of whom are loyal to the church, the sons being officers in their respective churches today. The record of the meeting of the session held March 5, 1889, bears testi-

mony to the useful life of Major Hall, and to the esteem in which he was held by his fellow-elders.

Joseph Henderson was ordained elder July 17th, 1864, in the unsettled times of the Civil War, and held office until his death in 1871. The first account we have of him was when he was a deacon. The ordinary conception in those days of what constituted proper occupations for good citizens was far different from our views today. Mr. Henderson planned to establish a distillery on his own premises and engage in that business. The session of the church had the proper ideas regarding occupations befitting a deacon in the church, and delegated Mr. James Gibson who lived in the same vicinity to wait upon Mr. Henderson and dissuade him from his purpose. At the first visit Mr. Henderson curtly informed Elder Gibson that what he was doing was no one else's business. After a time, however, better counsel prevailed and Mr. Henderson abandoned his enterprise, and there is evidence that he grew rapidly in grace, and in the esteem of Christian brethren. Only three years later his exemplary Christian life and piety were such as to establish complete confidence on the part of all who knew him, and he was elected and ordained an elder. It fell to him in turn to be sent by the session to confer with members of the church not walking in paths of rectitude and we can well believe that his own worthy example proved a decisive influence in reclaiming those walking in the paths of sin.

Mr. J. Samuel McCubbins was elected to the eldership along with Mr. A. F. Goodman in July, 1876, and continued to hold this high office until dismissed to the church in Salisbury in 1882. He resided on South Fulton Street in that city until his death about fifteen years later. Mr. McCubbins was for years owner of the flour mill now belonging to Elder J. W. Sloan, and resided in the spacious home with beautifully kept grounds at the top of the hill above the mill. Dr. and Mrs. Ramsay lived in the McCubbins house for the first year or two of their married life. Mr. McCubbins was a member of the committee that selected Mr. Ramsay. He was a man of affairs, also a man of kindly, gentle disposition. The records

testify that he was faithful, and loyal to the interests of the church.

All the elders mentioned above were men past the age of forty at the outbreak of the Civil War, and were not available for military service. The first elder in Thyatira who had served on the firing line was Alfred F. Goodman, wounded at Gettysburg. Soldier of his country for a few years, Mr. Goodman was a soldier of Jesus Christ from early manhood to a ripe old age. According to his own statement, he was possessed of a fiery temper in his early years and during his military life. Tempered by the Grace of God, Mr. Goodman became one of the gentlest and kindest of men, a veritable father of the church, whose devout life commanded the highest reverence, and whose fatherly interest and sympathy won the hearts, especially of the boys and young men of the church and community. He was a man who ordered well his own household, and whose prayers for his family, his church, and his neighbors were directed daily to the throne of grace. Mr. Goodman had served on committees of the church, notably in negotiating with Back Creek with reference to being grouped with Thyatira in securing a pastor in the person of Mr. Ramsay, before he was elected elder in 1876. Mr. Goodman long outlived all others who were on the elder's bench when he was ordained, and was long respected as the senior elder, until his death in 1916.

He was a man who enjoyed good preaching, and knew it when he heard it. He often represented Thyatira at meetings of Church Courts, and had a personal acquaintance with practically all the elders of Concord Presbytery, and enjoyed the friendship of a large number of ministers. He liked to speak of the sermons he had heard preached by various ministers, and retained well the principal thought. Whenever there was sickness in the congregation, Mr. Goodman showed by his example the duty and privilege of the elder in visiting the sick and the sorrowful. The writer, from his earliest days as a school boy, found a welcome in the Goodman home where he often spent the night with the boys of the family. Those visits

back in the days of childhood, continued, whenever opportunity presented itself, as long as Mr. Goodman lived, will be a treasured memory for the writer as long as he lives. One son of Mr. Goodman was a pastor in Orange and Fayetteville Presbyteries until his death, the other two are officers in their respective churches, while the only daughter has long been one of the loyal members of the old church and an efficient teacher in the Sunday school.

Mr. Columbus C. Miller was ordained elder in 1885, and served the church in this capacity for thirteen or more years, until he and his family removed to Mooresville, where he was an efficient officer in the Associate Reformed Presbyterian Church until his death. Mr. Miller belonged to a family that had been identified with the congregation for several generations. Many of that family connection have been excellent singers. Mr. Miller will long be remembered for his excellent tenor voice which probably surpassed any that have been heard at Thyatira for a half century, and his contribution to the music of the church was greatly appreciated for many years. His voice and his social gifts made many friends for Mr. Miller, who, as the years went by, became more and more identified with the interests of the church, and his removal from the community was greatly regretted by a large circle of friends.

The only elder yet to be mentioned, of those who have been removed by death, is James Franklin Carrigan. He became a deacon in 1871, which office he filled until he was made an elder in 1892, serving as treasurer of the church the most of this period. He was an elder until his death in 1904. For a time he served as superintendent of the Sunday school, and was clerk of the session, 1897 to 1903. There have been few men in the history of Thyatira possessed of such accurate and detailed knowledge of the English Bible. For many years he taught a large Bible class of which the writer as a boy was a member. He was a man who believed in listening carefully to sermons. There was no better judge of the quality of preaching than Mr. Carrigan, and none who appreciated good

preaching more than he. Rarely has the judgment of any other man regarding the affairs of the church been sought and relied upon so much as the judgment of Mr. Carrigan. His removal from earthly scenes was a loss severely felt by his associates who had trusted him for so many years.

John F. Goodman, a worthy son of a worthy father, was ordained to the eldership in 1902, and served along with his father until 1910, when he removed with his family to Flat Rock, near Hendersonville, where he still resides, and is an honored elder in the local church.

At the present writing the elders' bench comprises five men who are worthy successors of the long line of godly men who have preceded them.

Hugh W. Silliman, son and grandson of elders,—bearing a family name closely identified with the life of the church for a hundred years,—ordained in the year 1885, just forty years ago.

James W. Sloan, ordained in 1891.

E. Scott Miller, ordained in 1902.

Joseph F. Turner, ordained in 1910.

J. Samuel McCorkle, descendant of the early pastor, ordained in 1910.

Twenty-nine elders are mentioned as having served and passed to their reward, or removed to another locality, prior to 1855, at which date this sketch begins. Those who were in office in 1855, together with their successors during the seventy subsequent years, number twenty, making a total of forty-nine elders in the entire history of Thyatira church, whose names have been preserved for us, which list is probably complete.

We find in the sessional records no mention of the election of deacons prior to 1871, though deacons no doubt existed from the earliest years of the church. In the year just mentioned the first name that appears is that of J. Frank Carrigan, followed by James K. Parker, John C. Gillespie, and John L. Graham, elected in 1876, and Rufus Albright and Wilson A. Lingle elected in 1877. These are the men whom the writer remembers personally as being the deacons in his early boy-

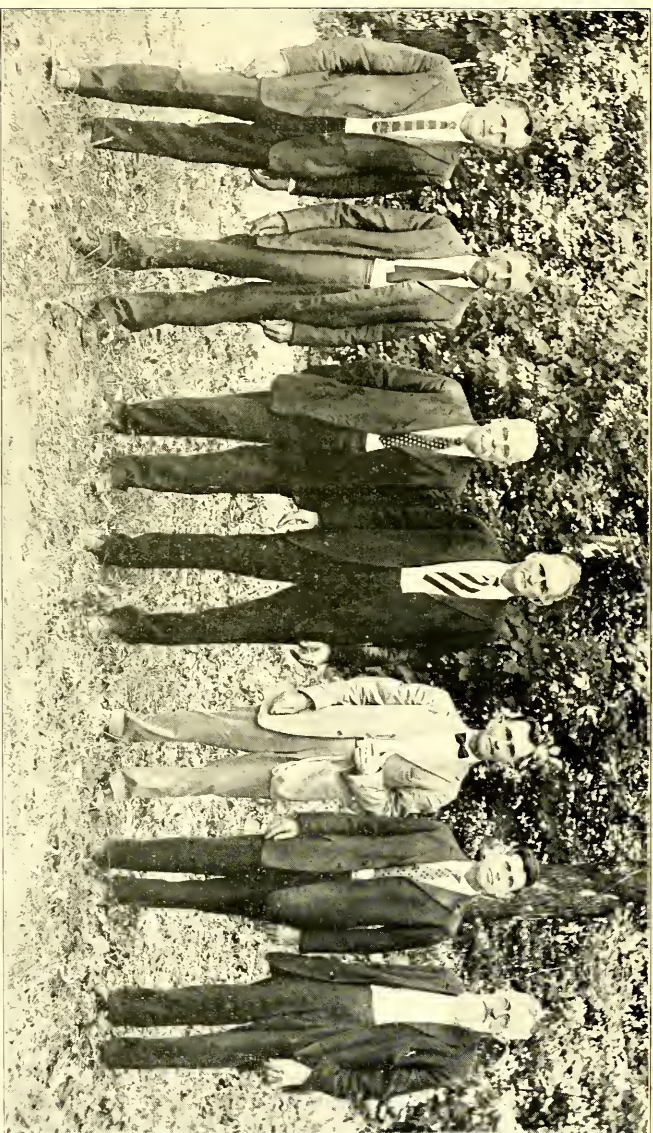


Photo by Alexander, Salisbury.

# BOARD OF DEACONS

Left to right—R. L. Abbright, G. F. Houck, C. A. Sloop, J. S. Hall, Chairman,

J. C. Carrigan, Treasurer, J. E. Deal, S. F. Baker



hood days. The church desired to have a deacon residing in each section of the congregation, so far as possible. These men took up the collection Sunday morning, each using his own hat for the purpose. They canvassed the congregation to make up the pastor's salary and to provide for any special expenditure in connection with the church. This was long before the era of "the every-member-canvass." Contributions to the benevolent causes of the church were made every year, though such contributions were very meagre. Those were lean years following the Civil War, there was scarcely any cash in this part of the country, and there was very little system in providing for the benevolent causes, though the pastor was usually faithful in laying the several causes upon the minds and hearts of the people. During this period Mr. Carrigan was treasurer of the board of deacons, in which capacity he served for many years. He was also chairman of the School Committee to secure the principal of the school and to make financial and other arrangements for the opening of Thyatira Academy which opened its doors in the summer of 1884. Mr. Lingle was chairman of the Building Committee which erected the school buildings, securing all available assistance in the undertaking. Being something of a carpenter and builder himself, he gave many days of his own labor to the erection of the building. It still stands on the church grounds, but has not been used for school purposes during the past twenty-five years, though it has served committees and classes of the church at times during all these years. When the present manse was erected, Mr. Lingle, who had some skill in handling a trowel, put up the chimneys which are still in use.

In 1882 Columbus A. Sloop was chosen to the diaconate, followed by S. F. Baker in 1886, J. W. M. Goodman in 1888, Henry N. Goodnight and J. Chalmers Carrigan in 1892, Geo. F. Houck and Joseph S. Hall in 1902, Jacob Deal in 1908, and Robert Albright in 1917.

When J. F. Carrigan was made an elder his successor as treasurer was S. F. Baker who served a long period until

1917. Since that date J. S. Harrison has been treasurer of benevolences, and J. C. Carrigan treasurer of local funds.

The two senior deacons, still in active service, are C. A. Sloop and S. F. Baker, who have thus far served 43 and 39 years respectively. Their associates are Messrs. Carrigan, Hall, Houck, Deal, and Albright, seven in all, resident, according to custom, in different sections for the congregation. All the above named deacons, except the seven last, died in office, with the exception of three. John L. Graham was dismissed in 1891 to Unity church. J. F. Carrigan became an elder in 1892, and J. W. M. Goodman left in 1890 to prepare himself for the Gospel ministry.

### OTHERS FAITHFUL TO THE CHURCH

In all the years gone by, just as is the case at present, there have been many men among the members of Thyatira, just as devoted to all the interests of the church as the officers mentioned above. They are too numerous to mention by name, and it would not be proper to single out just a few who may have especially impressed the author of this sketch. But their names are written in heaven. Their loyalty, devotion, and spirit of co-operation has made possible the great work the church has been able to do with the passing years. Still more numerous have been the godly women to whom the church and all its interests have been held as dear as life itself. The older members of the church can recall many of them who have passed beyond. To-day the devoted women of the church are worthy successors of their fathers and mothers who have preceded them. The oldest members of the church still recall Aunt Priscilla Gibson who died in the year 1874, at the ripe old age of 96. Among other women who reached an advanced age we may mention the following: Mary Cowan, died in 1890, aged 88 years; Britania Sloan, died 1889, aged 92 years. The four daughters of Elder Henry Sechler, Elizabeth, Amelia, Sarah and Dovey, passing away from earthly scenes between 1890 and 1920, reached an average age of

more than 80 years, and all these years were marked by godly lives full of good works, just as in the case of their pious parents. Few families in the history of the church ever made so deep an impression as the Sechler family by reason of their Christian piety. Elizabeth Lowery died in 1881 at the age of 82 years, and Elizabeth Lingle in 1884 at the age of 93 years. All these and many others obtained a good report through faith.

### CHURCH LIFE

During the entire period since 1855, just as prior to that date, the elders of the church have manifested a high sense of duty and privilege as regards their office, conforming as nearly as they have been able to the instructions given by the Apostle Paul regarding the office of a bishop. As we read the sessional records, we find the session dealing with members of the church who have fallen into a great variety of sins, including inconsistency, immorality, profanity, drunkenness, forgery, playing cards, desecration of the Sabbath, operating distilleries, etc. The list reminds one of the charges brought by Paul against members of his beloved church at Philippi, which was to him after all more nearly a model church than any other. In most cases it appears that the delinquent member was eventually reclaimed and restored to regular standing after confession and repentance, though in some cases the names were dropped from the church roll.

It is not known just when the Sunday school was definitely organized at Thyatira. It seems to have been some time during the second quarter of the nineteenth century. It is under the control of the session which has chosen the superintendents, generally an elder, or one who later became an elder. After the long superintendency of John K. Graham, as already mentioned, J. F. Carrigan was chosen as his successor for a few years, followed in turn by J. W. Sloan, and A. F. Goodman. In 1898, E. Scott Miller became the superintendent, and next to Mr. Graham he has held the office longer

than any one else in the history of the church. Among the very efficient and faithful teachers in the Sunday school, who have served through a long period of years are Calvin M. Varner, J. W. Sloan, Mrs. J. F. Turner, and her sister, Miss Margaret Parker, along with others that should be mentioned, if space permitted.

The first organ was introduced in the church about the year 1887, primarily to aid with the Sunday school music. Among those who have served as organist for shorter or longer periods have been the following: Mrs. Kate Lingle Sloan, Mrs. Nannie Lingle Russell, Mrs. Laura Goodman McCorkle, Miss Angie Silliman, Mrs. Nannie Sloop Harrison, Miss Helen Miller.

Since the days of Mr. Ramsay as pastor, or perhaps an earlier date, there has been a Ladies' Missionary Society, holding its meetings at stated intervals, and serving to broaden the religious interests and deepen the spiritual life of the women of the church. For several decades this society has had a notable ingathering, all-day meeting during the Christmas season at the home of some lady of the congregation. All bring their contributions to missions, their lunch baskets, and various members of their families, along with occasional guests. The meeting has its devotional feature, as well as its valuable social feature, and from time to time some one is invited from beyond the bounds of the congregation to come and make a talk.

A few years ago the society was transformed into a branch of the Woman's Auxiliary of the Presbyterian Church, with seven circles and leaders for the same. Notable among the women in this work have been Mrs. S. A. Carrigan (Fannie Silliman) and Mrs. J. C. Carrigan (Nettie Hart), whose recent translation from earthly scenes is still lamented by so many in the congregation. Among others likewise long devoted to this and other branches of the work of the church, and increasingly efficient in the work may be mentioned Miss Margaret Parker, Mrs. E. D. Brown and various others.

From time to time effort has been made to organize the

men of the church for effective work. In the days of Mr. Correll as teacher and Mr. Ramsay as pastor a young men's prayer-meeting was carried on with varying success. Something of the kind has been repeated during different pastorates. These prayer-meetings rendered invaluable service in training the young men of the church to lead in public prayer, and they no doubt turned the thoughts of more than one young man to the Gospel ministry.

From time immemorial communion service was held twice a year, the first Sundays of May and October, though at present, three times a year. The pastor usually invited another minister to come and assist him with the preaching. Among those thus invited we recall Dr. J. M. Wharey, Dr. William W. Pharr, Rev. Mr. Harold, Rev. R. S. Arrowood, Dr. W. A. Wood, and others, who always brought an inspiring gospel message. Few ministers today can bring home to the hearts of the young people the story of Jesus and his love more effectively than Dr. Wharey used to bring it at times to the young people of Thyatira. There was always preaching on the previous Friday at eleven, then a service before noon on Saturday, followed by a basket dinner spread on a long table, and then another sermon. Sunday the church was nearly always packed with members of the regular congregation and visitors who drove even ten or fifteen miles over inferior roads, in order to be present at the communion service where a splendid sermon was always expected. Once every few years the communion service was featured by singing of a high order, directed by a professional music teacher, who had been teaching a class in singing one day a week for eight weeks, while doing the same in five other churches that had co-operated in getting up singing schools, conducted by such masters as Mr. Collins and Mr. Freeman of Steele Creek, and others. The school was usually timed so as to end on Friday or Saturday before the communion service, and the director would remain over to take charge of the music Sunday morning, at which time the choir would sing one or two of the grand anthems they had been taught.

In the minutes of the Presbytery of Concord are found statistical tables pertaining to all the churches. In the year 1889, for example, there were five elders, five deacons, and 207 members. Money was scarce and contributions to the benevolences were small and uncertain. The pastor's salary was \$450 and free use of the manse, from Thyatira, and \$350 from Back Creek. Along with this went a small plot of land suitable for garden. However, the dollar had far greater purchasing power in those times than it has today.

At the present writing the elders number five, the deacons seven, and the membership 242. The pastor's salary, along with free use of manse, is \$1000 from Thyatira, and \$1000 from Back Creek.

In early days, when roads were so precarious, pastoral visits in the two wide-spread congregations made great demands on the time and strength of the pastor. In those times the people were satisfied with nothing less than an all-day visit from the pastor at least once a year, which came to be the common practice, so far as possible. To-day the good roads in so many directions, together with the automobile, make it possible for the pastor to see the members of the congregation far more frequently, and this has contributed in no small measure to the growth of the work of the church.

A marked feature of church life has been the greatly increased interest in and support of the benevolent causes of the church. The people of Thyatira feel themselves today, in a sense not previously experienced, a part of the great Southern Presbyterian Church, co-operating in all the forward movements of the church. The contributions to the various causes the past year have been as follows: Foreign Missions, \$606; Assembly's Home Missions, \$210; Synod's Home Missions, \$139; Presbytery's Home Missions, \$192; Christian Education and Ministerial Relief, \$109; Sunday School Extension, \$36; Educational Institutions, \$190; Bible Cause, \$11; Orphans' Home \$541; Current Expenses, etc., \$1.448.

On August 27th and 28th, 1915, there was held at Thyatira a "Historical Celebration and Home-Coming," with printed programme. Mr. Grier was pastor of the church at the

time. He was assisted in making the arrangements by various committees appointed by the congregation. Many sons and daughters of the church, whose lot has fallen in other sections of the State and country, returned for the occasion. There were preaching services, and addresses short and long, by the pastor of the church, by previous pastors, by W. L. and T. W. Lingle, and others. This event took place after the church had been in existence at least one hundred and fifty years, perhaps longer. It was but prophetic, as we hope, of a still longer and larger life for the old church.

### SONS AND DAUGHTERS IN CHRISTIAN WORK

The first son of the church since the Civil War to dedicate his life to preaching the gospel was William H. Lingle, son of Wilson A. and Martha J. Lingle. He took his college course at Blackburn College in Illinois, whence he entered McCormick Theological Seminary in Chicago, where he graduated in 1890. That same year he was sent as a missionary of the Northern Presbyterian Church to China, where he has labored continuously for thirty-five years.

The next in order was Walter L. Lingle who graduated at Davidson College and Union Seminary. He has served as pastor of the First Presbyterian church of Atlanta, Ga., as Professor in Union Seminary, as Moderator of the General Assembly, and he is now President of the Assembly's Training School for Lay Workers, in Richmond, Va., and he has held the office of President of the Board of Trustees of Davidson College for the past twenty years.

Thomas W. Lingle graduated at Davidson College, the University of Leipsic, Germany, and at Princeton Seminary. After serving seven years as Professor in a Presbyterian college in Brazil, South America, and in Illinois, he has been a Professor in Davidson College for the past seventeen years. He edited the Alumni Catalogue of Davidson College, has been a Commissioner to the General Assembly, and is a delegate

of the Assembly to the Pan-Presbyterian Alliance meeting in Cardiff, Wales, in June, 1925.

James W. M. Goodman, son of an honored elder, graduated at Davidson College and Union Seminary. He was for more than twenty-five years an efficient pastor in the Presbyteries of Orange and Fayetteville, until his death in 1923. His grave is found beside the graves of his parents in the old church yard.

John G. Varner, son of C. M. Varner, who has long been the efficient Bible teacher in the Sunday school, graduated at Davidson College and Union Seminary. For twenty-five years he has been a valuable member of the great Synod of Texas. He received his honorary degree from Austin College. For several years he has been President of the Presbyterian College of Texas, located at Milford.

James Floyd Menius graduated at Davidson College and Union Seminary, served as Home Missionary in east Tennessee and Western North Carolina, and is now a pastor in the Presbytery of Fayetteville.

Frank Fisher Baker, son of Samuel F. and Alice Houck Baker, graduated at Davidson College in 1913 and went immediately as a missionary to Southern Brazil where he has labored ever since, with the exception of two years spent at Union Seminary. The Assembly's Secretary of Foreign Missions speaks of him as having a remarkable mastery of the Portuguese language, and as a very aggressive Christian worker.

Daniel T. Caldwell graduated at Davidson College and Union Seminary, and spent a year as a graduate student at Princeton Seminary. After a ministry of seven years in Wilmington, N. C., during which time he married a daughter of Thyatira, Cora Belle Sloan, he recently entered upon the pastorate of the Second Presbyterian church, of Petersburg, Va.

Ernest Gilmer Clary, son of Lee and Emma Clary, graduated at Davidson College in 1916. After one year of teaching and two years of service in the army—in camp and in France—he entered Union Seminary in Richmond, Va., where

he graduated in 1922. He is now the pastor of the Presbyterian church, of Murphy, N. C.

There are several young men who are now in the course of preparation for the ministry. William Payne Brown, son of the pastor, graduated at Davidson College, and is now a student at Union Seminary. Clyde McCubbins, son of Absalom and Bettie Lingle McCubbins, now an elder in the Presbyterian church and superintendent of the Sunday school at Bethesda, Maryland, is under the care of the Presbytery, is studying theology under the pastor, and expects to enter Union Seminary the coming session. S. Carey Miller, son of E. Scott and Lillian Sloop Miller, is under the care of Presbytery and is a student at Davidson College.

Geo. Foyle Houck, son of a deacon, is also under the care of Presbytery, and is a student at Davidson College.

Ella G. Graham, daughter of Elder J. K. Graham, has been a missionary of our Church in Korea since 1907, where she has been abundant in labor and zeal for the Master's work.

Myrtle Lingle McCubbins (now Mrs. Crabb) graduated at Western College, Oxford, Ohio, and has been a missionary in China since 1907. She married Rev. Mr. Crabb, a missionary of the Northern Presbyterian Church.

Elizabeth Corriher, a graduate nurse, has been a missionary in China since 1908. She has rendered most valuable service in connection with the medical missions of our Church.

Mary Lee Sloan, a niece of the Lingle brothers, also identified with the work of our medical missions, has been a missionary in China since 1919.

Of the above named eighteen sons and daughters of Thyatira, who have dedicated their lives entirely to some form of Christian work at home and abroad, all but one are still living and zealously devoting their energy and talent to the work which they have undertaken.

## PRESBYTERY MEETS AT THYATIRA

Thyatira has been host to the Presbytery of Concord on numerous occasions. In the throes of the Civil War the spring meeting of Presbytery was held at Thyatira in April, 1863, just ten years after the last previous meeting held at this church. The Moderator was Rev. D. A. Penick. In July, 1873, an adjourned meeting was held, with Rev. E. F. Rockwell in the chair. The special occasion was to investigate certain charges brought against the pastor, Rev. Mr. Pharr. This meeting proved to be a notable event long remembered by those who were present. The regular stated meeting of the same year was held late in August, with Rev. G. M. Gibbs presiding. An adjourned meeting was held in May, 1877, at which the presiding officer was Rev. Jethro Rumble, he being the last Moderator present. The fall meeting of 1884 was held in September, Rev. A. Walker White in the chair. Numerous members of the congregation today still recall this as the first meeting of Presbytery of which they have any recollection, and some still remember the strong sermon preached on Romans 8:37, by Rev. C. M. Payne, of Concord. Rev. William W. Pharr presided at a call meeting held January 5, 1892. Rev. John Wakefield, a college class-mate of the writer, was Moderator of the Fall meeting held in September, 1901.

At the fall meeting held in September 27th, 1924, the opening sermon was preached by a son of the church, the retiring Moderator, W. L. Lingle, while the writer, his brother, was elected to succeed him.

In all these meetings the members of the congregation extended the utmost hospitality to the brethren of the Presbytery who were their guests, and showed their interest in the proceedings by the large attendance.

About the year 1890, the pastor, Mr. Ramsay, was employed by the Presbytery to copy its minutes, making an index and putting them into suitable form for permanent preservation. These minutes, written in beautiful form in the very legible hand of Mr. Ramsay, covering the period from

1795 to 1892, bound in leather in eight or ten large volumes, are preserved in the fire-proof vault of the library of Davidson College. With them are also the printed minutes of Presbytery for the succeeding years. In these minutes are hundreds of references to Thyatira church. These impressive volumes, covering a century and a quarter, constitute a very precious treasure for the future historian of Presbyterianism in a large section of North Carolina.

## RECORDS AND DOCUMENTS

The earliest known document pertaining to the history of Thyatira is the original deed to the land occupied by the church. This deed is now deposited for safe keeping in the fire-proof library of Union Seminary, Richmond, Va. There are, however, photographic copies of this deed in the hands of several members of the congregation. The deed conveys the title to the land to "The Trustees of Cathey's Meeting House," the name of the place of worship at that time, January 1st, 1753. George II. was then King of England, and the document bears the royal seal. The language and phraseology of the deed is legalistic and involved to a degree scarcely known today, in legal parlance.

Foote's Sketches of North Carolina have a great deal to say about the early history of Thyatira, though what this work says is for the most part embodied in the historical sketch of Thyatira prepared by Rev. S. C. Alexander in 1855. This sketch was prepared by young Mr. Alexander, and delivered by him at the celebration of the Centennial of the church. It is commonly known as "The History of Thyatira," though it is given up mostly to a brief sketch of the pastors and elders of the church.

Rumple's "History of Rowan County," also gives valuable data pertaining to the church.

The earliest volume purporting to contain sessional records was secured by Capt. John McCullough. He made the first entry of minutes in his own hand, and signs himself as

Clerk of the Session. The date of the first entry is August 31, 1831, though the record of baptisms begins with April 25, 1826. This volume contains a list of communicants as of 1831 and following years. Beginning with 1844, during the pastorate of Rev. James Hall, there seems to have been some persistent effort to keep the records of the meetings of the session, which meetings give evidence of being held very irregularly as regards both time and manner. The records are in the familiar hand of Thomas Todd, clerk from this date to the end of the first volume, in 1856. The same clerk continued in office until April 10, 1863. He started the second volume of minutes in 1856, introducing at the beginning the Alexander historical address, followed by a list of the members of the church.

The clerk's pen was taken up April 12th, 1863, by Elder John Knox Graham, who kept the records for thirty-two years, making his final entry April 12, 1895. Elder J. W. Sloan followed Mr. Graham as clerk for two years (1895-7) when he was succeeded in turn by Elder J. F. Carrigan for a period of six years (1897-1903). At the end of this time the clerk's pen reverted to Elder Sloan, whose clear, legible hand-writing continues to the end of Volume II. (1907), and far down into Volume III., to the present hour. His period of service as clerk has already been longer than that of any of his predecessors except Mr. Graham.

There is still a persistent tradition in the congregation to the effect that a fire which destroyed the residence of the first Elder Silliman also destroyed such sessional records as existed at that time. This, however, seems to be a mistake. It is expressly stated by Thomas Todd in Volume I., that no regular sessional records had ever been kept prior to his day. We have no evidence that any documents of special importance were destroyed by the fire.

The student of the records will be interested in various resolutions of respect prepared in memory of some honored member of the session who was called from earthly scenes.

The first official approval of the sessional records was

given by the Presbytery of Concord in session at Bethpage church, April 8, 1847.

## CHURCH BUILDING

The present handsome brick edifice, erected in 1860, as previously stated, is the fourth building in which the congregation has worshipped. The west gallery was intended for slaves who were members of the church, and for other persons of the same race. After the Civil War colored people continued to worship here for twenty years or more. The writer recalls vividly the attendance of colored people at every preaching service. Today the colored people have their own churches and no longer worship in churches with the white race.

There was a large, tall window to the rear of the pulpit, hung with handsome drapery curtains which were a striking feature of the interior of the church. About the year 1880, the place where the window had been for twenty years was bricked in and made a portion of the wall, though the outline of the window can still be discerned.

The original steeple reached an altitude of 110 feet from the ground. In school days in the eighties we often vied with each other in throwing a ball to the top of the steeple. About the year 1892 the structure of the steeple was condemned as being unsafe, due to weather, storm, and perhaps lightning. The entire structure was then taken down, and the present tower and modest spire with an altitude of about 70 feet replaced it. The architectural effect is good, but not as impressive as the original light, graceful spire that gave the lines a decidedly perpendicular effect, reminding one of the handsome Gothic churches of Europe. At the time this change was made, the windows were for the first time equipped with green shutters, which are still in use.

There was excavation under the church as erected in 1860, intended for a furnace. It is said that a furnace was installed in the early days, but that it was not a success, and

that it was soon removed. From that time onward the church was heated in winter by means of two wood-burning stoves placed, one under the east gallery, the other under the west, with a pipe running from each to the middle of the church, where they joined a perpendicular pipe which carried the smoke upward through the roof, except such smoke as escaped and filled the church. In the year 1920 the excavation under the church was enlarged and the present furnace was installed by a committee of which Elder J. W. Sloan was chairman. The stoves and pipes were then removed from the interior of the church, leaving room for more seats for the congregation.

When the present building was erected, apparently about of hundred yards south of the spot where its predecessor stood, the old log session house which was connected with the third church building, or perhaps even the second one, was left standing. It was located at a distance of about 150 yards or more to the southwest of the southwest corner of the present church edifice. This session house disappeared a little before the school building of the eighties was erected. A Bible Class was taught in the old session house for many years.

## CEMETERY

A burying ground was set apart apparently about the time preaching service was undertaken near the middle of the 18th century. In early days a stone fence more than waist high was built around this parcel of ground. There is evidence that originally the cemetery covered only about a third of its present area. At the end of a period of some three-quarters of a century, near the year 1825, two sides of the stone fence were extended southward to their present limits. The connecting fence running east and west was removed to the south to connect the extremities of the two long sides, thus forming the quadrangle remembered so well today by the older members of the congregation. In the writer's boyhood days the fence was kept in good repair on all four sides. Not only did it serve to keep out hogs and cattle that roamed at

large in those days, but it constituted an impressive enclosure for this sacred spot. Entrance was through a large iron gate which stood between pillars at the middle of the south side fence. Through this portal was borne for many years all that was mortal of those who had worshipped so often in the church nearby. The gate and its bearings were made by hand about the year 1825, in the blacksmith shop of Mr. Billy Cooper, located not far from Concordia Lutheran church. Mr. Cooper was a relative, several generations removed, of Mrs. John Siliman who is now a member of Thyatira church. The material was Swedish iron which was imported in quantities a hundred years ago, as it is today, being greatly in demand owing to its high degree of malleability, in which quality it far surpasses American iron. This fine material, in the hands of a skilled craftsman, was transformed on the anvil into a work of art bearing not the slightest trace of the blacksmith's hammer.

When Rowan County voted in the "stock law" in the year 1881, farmers were required to confine their stock to their own land and pasture. From that time onward there was no danger of injury to graves and stones by cattle and hogs. This was the signal for the deterioration of the stone fence. After this date repairs were seldom made when a portion of the stone fence crumbled, and large sections of it fell apart. Certain sections of the fence still intact give some indication of the dignity of the original enclosure. About the year 1885, the first grave was dug outside the south fence, followed in rapid succession by others. The consequence was the eventual removal of all the stone constituting the fence on the entrance side, together with the handsome gate. The area of the cemetery has already been extended more than twenty yards beyond the former location of the fence, and it will no doubt be further extended southward as necessity arises. The present area of the cemetery is estimated to be about three acres.

For forty years the iron gate lay in the leaves or stood against a hickory tree to the rear of the church, apparently not greatly appreciated by the congregation. Early this year,

1925, authority was given for it to be taken to Davidson College, where it has been set between pillars at the entrance of a residence belonging to the College, now occupied by Prof. Frazer Hood. This gate is to remain permanently the property of Davidson College, subject only to the condition that it shall be returned to Thyatira church, in case the church should at any time in the future make formal request that it be returned. It has already been extensively admired and photographed by visitors to the College from many States, and articles describing it have been written for "The Metal Age," and other technical magazines. It stands on State Highway No. 26, on the west side, in front of the fourth house south of the Davidson Cemetery.

About the year 1910, a committee of which George F. Houck was chairman, was authorized to remove vines and other growth from the cemetery, set up stones that had fallen down, and realign them in various places where it could be done without removing a stone more than a few feet from the grave it was intended to mark. The motive was a good one, but the task a rather difficult one, and a few stones seem not to have found an appropriate place after the realignment, and several are now leaning against the stone fence, apart from the graves they marked so long.

In the oldest part of the cemetery there are hundreds of graves no longer marked, if indeed they ever were. Headstones of soapstone are still intact, but inscriptions on inferior qualities of stone are scarcely legible today. The earliest date ever observed on any of these stones by the writer, is 1757. Stones bearing a date of twenty-five years later are much more numerous. Various ones indicate that the deceased were soldiers of the American Revolution. Among the most eminent persons who lie buried here are Dr. Samuel McCorkle, and the young jurist, Judge Matthew Locke. In the northern and middle parts of the cemetery are the names of many families conspicuous in the church in their day, that have entirely disappeared from the community, and in many cases no relatives of theirs remain in the congregation. A more detailed ac-

count of the older parts of the cemetery will be found published in the Davidson College Monthly about 1890, in the form of a study made by W. L. Lingle while a student at the College.

South of the center are located the graves of grandparents, parents, children, and other relatives of most of the active members of the congregation today. Here in the stillness of the forest which surrounds this ancient burying-ground on all sides is a hallowed spot that will ever be held as sacred and approached in reverence by all of us who have loved ones sleeping here beneath the sod, awaiting the resurrection morn.

The church of Thyatira, through its preachers, its officers and its members, by reason of their character, their knowledge of God's Word, their intelligent faith, has caused religion to be respected by all people. The young of the church, in far larger measure than most places, have their attention directed to the Gospel ministry, to mission work at home and abroad, and to having an active share in the promotion of Christ's Kingdom wherever their lot may be cast. May the great Head of the Church so bless and guide his people at Thyatira in all the years that are to come, that this venerable Church may in an ever increasing measure stand forth as a fearless, faithful witness of Jesus Christ!

“I love Thy kingdom, Lord,  
The house of Thine abode,  
The church our blest Redeemer saved  
With His own precious blood.  
I love Thy church, O God!  
Her walls before me stand,  
Dear as the apple of mine eye,  
And graven on Thy hand.”

Davidson College, June 6th, 1925.

















## Date Due

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